THE STATE LIBRARY
Washington Secretary of State
SAM REED

STATEWIDE VIRTUAL REFERENCE PROJECT

Steering Committee Meeting Notes

DATE: March 19, 2004
LOCATION: Regional Justice Center, Kent

ATTENDEES: Linda Fenster, Alice Goudeaux, Buff Hirko, Nancy Huling, Lisa Oberg, Lorena O'English, Barbara Pitney.

NOTES: The next VRS training class, scheduled to begin April 26, is already full (12 learners). Three Canadian librarians will participate. Four librarians (from libraries not currently providing VR service) are on the waiting list; if more request registration, Buff will try to schedule another class to begin in May. Montana State Library will provide a mirror web site for the training curriculum to cover the down time when the SPL server is moved to the new central building.

The Library Ambassadors (the revised term for the VRS Spokespersons) have not scheduled any presentations yet, although it is anticipated that they will do so in the near future. We have booked an exhibit booth and class at the Washington Homeschoolers Organization (WHO) convention in Puyallup in June and the WHO NW Curriculum Exhibit in Spokane in August. Buff will announce a request for libraries to provide promotional materials for distribution at these events, as well as underscoring the availability of the ambassador presentations.

The group reviewed draft documents for VET, the Virtual Evaluation Toolkit:
- VET outline
- Reference Survey Questions
- Virtual Reference Transaction Checklist (based on the Secret Patron activity, training curriculum)
- Web Site Evaluation Checklist (also based on training activity materials)

Buff noted that other documents are being developed, such as the policy checklist, but are not yet ready. In general, committee members were enthusiastic about the toolkit. VET has several parts: 1) developing evaluation tools, 2) conducting evaluation at three test sites (King County Library System, King County Law Library, Skagit Valley College), 3) providing a report of results to test libraries, 4) preparing an analysis of the entire process, 5) posting the entire package to a web site, and 6) presenting a program at VRD 2004.

Currently, the Needs Assessment subcommittee is in stage 1, moving quickly to 2. Two April meetings will finish work on the toolkit. Anne Bingham and Nancy Foley, who are VRS trainers, will have amended contracts that will allow them to conduct the test evaluations. The test libraries will be assessed via two methods: virtual (conducting transactions, looking at web

sites, etc.) and on-site (checking policies and procedures, meeting with staff, etc.) Anne and Nancy will meet with the subcommittee at their April 26 meeting, and then we will schedule the actual test evaluations. It was agreed that the fee for the complete 3-library test process will be $1000.

The group made several recommendations. Prior to the evaluation, libraries will need to know what materials/statistics to gather for the evaluators. They suggested including information on how to insure staff buy-in for the process. When libraries receive the report, we should ask how they expect to use the information. A six-month follow-up questionnaire should be sent to the three libraries to determine the effectiveness of VET.

VET will be recommended at three levels of implementation, depending upon library resources (staff, time, interest) available for the process. In any case, libraries can choose which tools they prefer to use. The test evaluations will include all Level 1 tools—reference transaction checklist, web site evaluation checklist, survey review, policy checklist. Level 2 adds web log database vendor statistics; Level 3 adds peer review, transcript analysis, and focus groups. Nancy Huling felt strongly that with minor modification, the "Virtual Reference Transaction Checklist" would make a good tool for transcript analysis. Buff noted that Craig Kyte was also very interested in evaluating consortia, although that would require a different perspective/set of tools.

The next Steering Committee meeting will be held on April 29, location to be announced.